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ABSTRACT

The extent to which staff appraisal has been implemented at Britain's public sector further education (FE) institutions and the characteristics, benefits, and disadvantages of existing appraisal systems were examined in a survey of 233 FE institutions (36% of all institutions in the public FE sector). Of the FE institutions surveyed, 76% had one appraisal scheme, and 18% had two or more. Of those systems, 57% were introduced in 1992-1994 and 37% covered all full-time staff. FE institutions were using appraisal systems to identify and implement appropriate staff development and identify targets related to organizational objectives for staff development. Appraisal was almost completely unrelated to performance-related pay. Most appraisal systems reflected principles of good practice in terms of development, design, and implementation, and most were separate from disciplinary, grievance, capability, promotion, and reference procedures. Most monitoring and evaluation systems focused on individuals rather than the organization. Appraisal systems were praised for contributing to staff and organizational development and providing opportunities for dialogue between appraiser and appraisee. The most commonly cited disadvantage of appraisal systems was the heavy time commitment involved (especially for appraisers). (Eleven tables are included. The report contains 26 references, a 48-item bibliography, the survey questionnaire, and 31 figures.) (MN)

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Appraisal in FE – where are we now?

Elizabeth Walker

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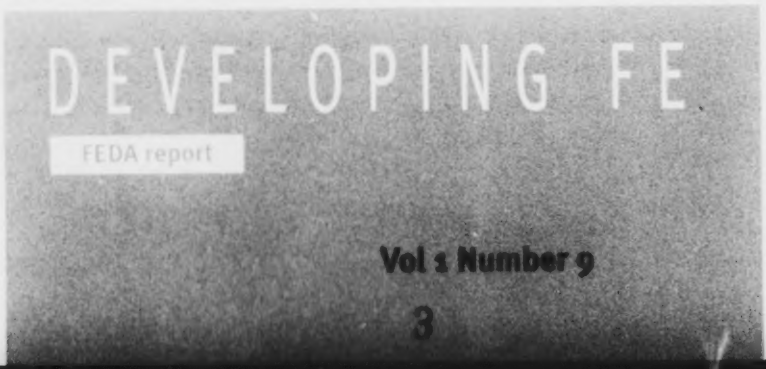
Appraisal in FE – where are we now?

Elizabeth Walker



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Executive summary

More than one-third of all public sector further education (FE) institutions have been surveyed to identify the extent to which staff appraisal has been implemented. The findings have revealed the main characteristics of appraisal schemes and their perceived benefits and disadvantages. This report presents the findings, and considers their implications for the FE sector, and in the context of relevant literature.

For the purposes of this report, appraisal is defined as:

> *An opportunity to review and discuss with each individual his/her past performance and, based on the conclusions reached, agree a plan of action and/or priorities for the forthcoming period.* (Edwards, 1984)

Research questions

Current literature on appraisal was consulted to identify the key issues, which would then become the focus of this research. Chapter 1 gives the details. The research questions which emerged from this review fall into three categories:

- **Extent of implementation in FE**

  Given the varied pattern and history of appraisal in the FE sector, and the introduction of the National Joint Council (NJC) framework for academic staff in 1991, to what extent has appraisal been implemented?

- **Characteristics of appraisal schemes**

  - *Strategic context*

    What do FE colleges see as the most important purposes of an appraisal scheme?

    What is the relationship between the purposes of specific schemes and organisational objectives, in particular the overall aim identified by the NJC:

    to enhance the quality of the service provided by the institution?

  - *Design, implementation and evaluation*

    In the context of good practice, to what extent are the design of the scheme and the processes of implementation and evaluation likely to contribute to or detract from the specific purposes and NJC overall aim identified above?

- **Effectiveness of appraisal**

  What are the perceived benefits and disadvantages of appraisal schemes and to what extent do they fit with identified purposes and the overall aim?

  Is there evidence of ongoing development of schemes to continue to improve their effectiveness?

Key findings

Extent of implementation

- A total of 272 schemes in 233 further education institutions were surveyed. These institutions constitute 36 per cent of all in the public FE sector. The results reveal widespread implementation of appraisal: 76 per cent of institutions have one scheme, and 18 per cent have two or more schemes.
- The majority (57%) of current schemes were introduced in the period 1992-1994, which is the period agreed by the NJC.
- Out of all of the schemes, 37 per cent cover all full-time staff; in all other cases only particular categories of staff (such as academic or business support) are included.

Characteristics

Purposes

- FE institutions use appraisal schemes to identify and implement appropriate staff development, and to identify targets for this development, linked to organisational objectives.
- There is almost no evidence of appraisal being linked to performance-related pay.

Links with organisational objectives

- Findings suggest that appraisal schemes can make a strategic contribution to the quality of service provided by the institution, as envisaged in the agreed national FE framework.
- A high percentage of FE institutions (65%) are committed to the Investors in People Standard and a lower proportion (30%) have been awarded the standard.

Design

- Most of the schemes reflect principles of good practice in terms of their development, design and implementation.
- Appraisal schemes are separate from disciplinary, grievance, capability, promotion and references procedures.
- A high proportion of schemes (83%) use a line management model. There is evidence of peer appraisal in eight per cent of schemes, but very little evidence of 360° or upward appraisal, which each occur in only two per cent of schemes.
- The main additional input is from other managers (39% of schemes). There is some input from subordinates (18%), students (15%), other college clients (7%) and peers (27%).
- Observation of teaching contributes to appraisal in 64 per cent of schemes, and evaluation of tasks contributes to appraisal in 54 per cent of schemes (8% gave no response).
- Other evidence which informs appraisal includes the outcomes of previous appraisal interviews (70% of schemes), inspection feedback (29% of schemes), section reviews (30% of schemes), and course reviews (9% of schemes).
- The majority (76%) of schemes have appeals procedures; these are only known to have been used in 10 per cent of schemes.

Implementation and evaluation

- The focus of monitoring and evaluating appraisal schemes is at the individual rather than the organisational level.
- For most schemes (83%), participation is compulsory.
- Appraisal is annual in almost half (48%) of schemes and takes place every two years in most other schemes.
- Just over half of the schemes (57%) include an interim review.

- There is little evidence of time specifically allocated for appraisal, for appraisers or appraisees.
- There is some choice of appraiser in 56 per cent of schemes, although in most cases this is constrained. Just more than a quarter (27%) of schemes do not allow any choice of appraiser.
- Appraisal training is provided in the majority of schemes, most commonly one day for appraisers and half a day for appraisees. Training is compulsory in the majority of schemes; appraisers and appraisees are trained together in 29 per cent of schemes and separately in 43 per cent of schemes.
- In the majority of schemes, preparation for appraisal frequently includes pre-meetings and the exchange of documents between appraiser and appraisee.
- Common appraisal locations include the appraiser's office, specific rooms, and, less commonly, the appraisee's office.
- The majority of schemes use a range of standard documentation, the use of which is generally compulsory.
- Confidentiality of appraisal documentation is regarded as highly important. In the majority of cases only the appraiser and appraisee have access to the full appraisal record.
- The identification, recording and monitoring of specific outcomes are common features of appraisal schemes; although the level of detail recorded is variable.
- Nearly 90 per cent of schemes are monitored to check that appraisal is taking place. Monitoring to check that outcomes have been identified, implemented and reviewed is less common, although it is reported to occur in 50-67% of schemes.
- Out of all of the schemes, 40 per cent have been evaluated to identify benefits to individual appraisees. There has been a substantially lower level of evaluation of benefits for the team (7%) and for the organisation (14%).

Effectiveness

Benefits and disadvantages

- Cost-benefit analysis of appraisal has only taken place for seven per cent of schemes.
- Schemes are perceived as having more benefits for individual appraisees and appraisers than for teams and whole organisations, although benefits are identified at all of these levels.
- The benefits most frequently identified reflect the explicit purposes for which schemes have been designed, that is to contribute to staff development and to identify targets linked to organisational objectives. The opportunity for dialogue between appraiser and appraisee (usually line manager and staff member) is frequently identified as a benefit of appraisal.
- The most commonly identified disadvantage of appraisal schemes is the heavy time commitment involved, particularly for appraisers.

Ongoing development

- The findings reveal that many of the institutions (51%) are planning changes to schemes.
- The most commonly planned changes include making schemes simpler and linking appraisal to organisational objectives. This suggests an awareness of the need for developments in this area, particularly in the context of the commitment of a high proportion of colleges to the Investors in People Standard which takes a strategic approach to staff appraisal.

Chapter 1

Development of appraisal schemes: key issues

Developments to date

The FE sector workforce has, for historical reasons, comprised management staff, staff described as 'academic' (those in lecturing and in some research posts), and staff described as 'support' (those in administrative, technical and clerical posts), referred to as 'business support' for the purposes of this research. Different terms and conditions have applied to these groups, including different arrangements for appraisal. At the time that most appraisal schemes were developed, management staff in general fell within the scope of the appropriate appraisal arrangements, depending upon their particular role and the individual college approach. For business support staff, the appraisal schemes developed with trade unions in local education authorities (LEAs) have been applied to staff in some, but not all, FE colleges; some are compulsory.

In 1991 a national framework for appraisal of academic staff was agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC), which included employer (LEA) and academic staff union representatives. This came about following the 1986 Education Act which required:

local education authorities and others to secure the regular appraisal of teachers in schools and further education establishments. (Section 49, Scribbins and Walton, 1987)

Colleges were to develop local schemes by August 1992 and to complete the first year of the appraisal cycle for academic staff by 31 August 1994. Some colleges opted for a single scheme for all staff while others concentrated on meeting the NJC agreement requirements of introducing a scheme solely for academic staff, to operate either on its own or alongside an existing scheme for business support staff. A single scheme would help to promote a shared commitment to organisational objectives. If introduced sensitively, it could have a positive impact on organisational culture, which would be critical to its effectiveness, suggest Long (1986) and Anderson (1993). One of the benefits of this survey would be to reveal the extent to which colleges have implemented single appraisal schemes to cover all staff.

The range of approaches to appraisal in FE colleges is diverse. It is likely that these practices have diversified even further following incorporation in April 1993, when LEAs ceased to have jurisdiction over colleges. This survey will show different approaches taken in FE today.

Identifying the key issues

A review of current literature on appraisal has revealed the main issues surrounding staff appraisal in FE. These fall into three categories:

- strategic context of appraisal: the relationship between the purposes of specific schemes and organisational objectives, and between appraisal and other organisational procedures
- design, implementation and evaluation: including the appraisal model chosen, and the training, preparation, documentation and resourcing, monitoring and evaluation processes used
- effectiveness of appraisal: perceived benefits and disadvantages, outcomes of a cost-benefit analysis and planned development.

Strategic context of appraisal

Taking a strategic human resource management approach to appraisal would suggest that the organisation intends the scheme to increase its ability to meet strategic objectives. Anderson (1993) refers to performance appraisal as a 'key element' in enabling organisations to:

> *evaluate, utilize and develop the skills and abilities of their employees to ensure that organisational goals are achieved.*

Opinions vary about how appraisal schemes might best be used to accomplish these aims. Some schemes have focused on evaluative approaches, while others have emphasised developmental approaches. These are sometimes referred to as 'hard' and 'soft' schemes (Scribbins and Walton, 1987). Table 1 (overleaf) shows the main purposes of appraisal identified in the literature, ranged along this dimension.

The evaluative approach measures performance in some way and punishes or rewards people (for example, through pay) according to how they perform. It is based on the belief that extrinsic rewards are motivating and will make a positive impact on performance. The developmental approach is based on the assumption that feedback on performance and the ability to do the job to a higher standard will itself be intrinsically motivating. Herzberg (1968) suggests that intrinsic motivators, such as job enrichment, will have a more sustained effect on performance, while extrinsic factors such as pay are only likely to motivate in the short term. These two approaches have different implications for the design of appraisal schemes and for the focus of organisational resources. As a result, they are sometimes seen as mutually exclusive. The evaluative approach allocates more resources to those who perform well while the developmental approach allocates them to those who need to improve their performance.

There are many appraisal schemes which aim to achieve both objectives: to set and review organisational objectives and to identify staff development needs. This philosophy underpins the Investors in People Standard (Employment Department, 1991), which sees identification

and communication of organisational objectives as a prerequisite to establishing an appropriate system for staff development. Other support for this approach comes from, for example, Beer and Walton (1990) and Hartle (1995).

Focusing more specifically on the FE sector, the NJC framework states that:

> *the overall objective of schemes of staff development, training and appraisal should be to enhance the quality of the service provided by the institution...*

MORE DEVELOPMENTAL (SOFTER) APPROACHES

To provide opportunities for employees to discuss career ambitions with their appraisers

To identify staff training and development needs

To facilitate manager/worker dialogue

To identify employee potential

To contribute to quality initiatives

To improve future performance

To promote cultural change

To provide feedback to appraisees from managers

To monitor past performance

To set performance objectives

To help the company make decisions about pay

To facilitate disciplinary action

MORE EVALUATIVE (HARDER) APPROACHES

TABLE 1: MAIN PURPOSES OF STAFF APPRAISAL
[SOURCES: ANDERSON (1993), GILL (1977), LONG (1986), YEATES (1990)]

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> *Schemes of development, training and appraisal should ... allow for the proper determination of individual lecturers' professional development needs and for the joint clarification of individual priorities and objectives.* (Lee, 1991)

Lee reports that the appraisal schemes of the seven FE colleges which piloted the NJC framework only fulfilled these intentions to a limited extent. His findings, published in an National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) report, include the recommendation that:

> *In order to benefit individuals and the institution, and thereby enhance the quality of the service provided, the links between individual approaches and corporate review need to be firmly established.* (Lee, 1991)

This approach recognises the developmental nature of appraisal, and emphasises the motivational importance of feedback and development rather than extrinsic reward or punishment (such as discipline, promotion or performance-related pay). By stressing the need to identify targets which are linked to organisational objectives, it also has a strategic focus. Such an approach is recommended good practice in much of the appraisal literature (for example Anderson, 1993, Hartle, 1995) and is a key point of the Investors in People initiative (Employment Department, 1991). Speaking specifically of FE, Liz McGrath (1996) suggests that:

> *A blame-producing, problem-identifying appraisal system is not the only alternative to an over-cosy praise or 'celebration' chat. It is possible to be perfectly clear about organisational imperatives and constraints, about objectives and responsibilities, within a context which incorporates recognition of work, appreciation of effort and success, need for support and areas of potential development.*

Although widely recommended, such an approach does require a thorough and skilled attitude to the development, design and implementation of the scheme in order to be motivational, credible and effective.

Design and implementation

Models of appraisal

Key issues when designing an appraisal scheme are the identity of the appraiser, the range of information used as a basis for appraisal, and the means by which it is collected. The main models are:

- line manager appraisal
- peer appraisal
- upward appraisal
- self-appraisal
- 360° appraisal.

The most common model is the line manager one (Anderson, 1993). This is relatively simple to understand and implement, and allows appraisal to deal with performance management within the overall line management relationship. Such schemes should provide line managers with valuable information about staff roles and perspectives, and increase the probability that appraisal will have a strategic dimension, provided that line managers are clear about strategic priorities.

Fletcher (1993) describes peer appraisal as having:

> *an appeal in academic and teaching institutions.*

Evidence suggests that levels of use are relatively low, partly because of the reluctance of peers to move into this role, and partly because of the perceived need for management input into the process and its outcomes.

Some element of self-appraisal is essential if appraisees are to be committed to the process. However, it is difficult to link such a scheme with other organisational processes if it is the only aspect of appraisal. Self-appraisal and upward appraisal (where those lower down in the management hierarchy contribute to the appraisal) are more likely to form part of the process than the whole of it.

Information from other colleagues, customers, clients and subordinates now has a higher profile in the appraisal process. This is due to the diverse management structures that exist within further education and to the increased emphasis on the link between appraisal and organisational objectives.

Recognition of the importance of information from all angles has led to the development of the 360° model. Milliman et al. (1995) claim that this approach will increase the probability that employees meet their performance objectives.

The extent to which information from students and other college clients, and from course reviews and college inspection, informs the appraisal process is a significant issue to be addressed by this research.

Degree of choice

If appraisees are to take ownership of the scheme they need to believe they have some choice over appraisal decisions. If participation was optional then evaluation and development of employees would be piecemeal and the scheme's effectiveness as part of a strategic approach would be limited. However, a rigid scheme imposed on staff with no consultation would be demotivating and so also limited in effectiveness.

Good practice suggests the need to balance flexibility with structure, taking into account the critical issue of organisational culture (Anderson, 1993). Allowing some choice of appraiser, and including a supportive appeals procedure, will help to increase employee commitment. This will also help to address the issue of indirect discrimination – given that most appraisal schemes are line management models, appraisers are more likely to be white, male and able-bodied.

Employers must be aware of this issue early on: when designing and implementing their scheme they should remember their legal responsibility under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976 not to discriminate (Myland, 1992).

The NJC has recognised that choice of appraiser is a sensitive issue. It has identified criteria which the appraiser must satisfy, which include that appraisers have:

> *a sound knowledge and understanding of the work of each appraisee (and) are in a position to ensure that agreed outcomes are processed through appropriate institutional structures.* (Lee, 1991)

The NJC also recommends some degree of choice, and then leaves the decision to local schemes. The issue of choice, linked with ownership and commitment, applies to many other aspects of appraisal design and will be considered in the context of the survey findings.

Training

For appraisal to be effective and credible all participants must be adequately prepared to take part. It is generally recognised that appraisers need specific training, but not always that appraisees do. There is a strong argument for training appraisers and appraisees together. Set against this is the high resource implication, since there are likely to be at least five or ten times as many appraisees as appraisers. However, training of appraisees is now considered good practice (Anderson, 1993). The NFER evaluation report emphasises the critical role that training played in the pilot schemes and the NJC commentary states that:

> *training is not cheap, but it is essential.* (Lee, 1991)

Preparation, location and documentation

Decisions about other aspects of the process, such as preparation, location and documentation, must strike a balance between structure and flexibility which is appropriate to the culture of the organisation and the purposes of the scheme.

Adequate preparation by appraiser and appraisee is essential if appraisal resources are not to be wasted. The appropriate location for the appraisal interview is a matter of personal taste. However, having a degree of flexibility and involving the appraisee in the decision is likely to increase the sense of ownership and commitment to the scheme.

Documentation should be designed to make a positive contribution to the process. A common criticism of schemes is that they are dominated by paperwork which is a distraction rather than a support (Lee, 1991).

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring a scheme to ensure that appraisals are taking place and outcomes are being implemented is a distinct process from evaluating the scheme in terms of benefits and disadvantages at an individual and organisational level. The extent and nature of the monitoring and evaluation which takes place is not clear from the literature. There is evidence of an increasing emphasis on the need to identify organisational as well as individual benefits (for example, Anderson, 1993), so that appraisal fulfils the strategic role advocated, for example by Guest (1989). However, there is also a recognition that such evaluation is 'notoriously difficult to do' (Yeates, 1990).

With respect to further education, the NJC framework (1991) recommends ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It suggests that this includes considering the effectiveness of the link between individual appraisal and wider review issues, reinforcing its strategic role.

Effectiveness of appraisal

Much of the literature identifies potential benefits and disadvantages of appraisal, but comprehensive information about the relative costs and benefits of appraisal has not emerged. One of the more comprehensive surveys (Long, 1986) reports on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of 250 appraisal schemes.

Chapter 2

Organising the research

Deciding on the approach

Identifying the key issues in appraisal from the literature review revealed a framework around which the research could be structured. To fulfil its objectives the research would have to be conducted in such a way as to achieve:

- comprehensive coverage of the sector, giving information about as many colleges as possible rather than detailed information about schemes in a small number of colleges
- a cross-section approach which would give a comprehensive picture of the current situation, rather than a longitudinal study giving historical information about the process of scheme development.

These criteria called for an approach which would enable the collection and analysis of a large volume of data. The data needed to be in a form which would facilitate structured and meaningful quantitative analysis, while still retaining enough detail to address the research questions, identified in the Executive summary.

Using a questionnaire

Data would be collected via a carefully designed questionnaire, rather than by interviews, because it would only have been practicable to conduct interviews in about five per cent of colleges, a very small sample size. The questionnaire would be sent to 653 public sector FE institutions in England, Wales and Scotland.

For much of the information required there were only a small number of probable responses. So to increase the probability of completion, and for ease of analysis, most of the questionnaire involved fixed response answers using tick boxes. Where other responses would be meaningful, text boxes were included for the respondent to record the details.

One area for which an open-ended question was required concerned the identification of perceived benefits and disadvantages of the schemes. In this instance the response would be based on the respondent's judgement of the situation. Categorising the question according to the purposes of the scheme may have created an artificial link between purposes and their accomplishment. It would also have prevented any unanticipated benefits from being revealed. The responses to this question would be considered in the context of identified purposes and the overall aim of enhancing the institution's quality of service.

The questionnaire was designed to address the research questions, with information requested on the areas outlined in Table 2. A full list of the questions included in the questionnaire is given in Appendix 3.

Limitations of the methodology

Representativeness of the sample

Sending the questionnaires out by post would mean that there would be no control over the survey returns and therefore no control over the sample of respondents. Although in this case the response rate was relatively good (36%), it still means that the results include no data on

EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION IN FE
• Number of schemes in the institution
• Coverage of schemes
• When the schemes were introduced
CHARACTERISTICS
• **Strategic context**
Status with respect to Investors in People Standard
Purposes
• **Design and implementation**
Choice about participation
Relationship with other procedures
Frequency of appraisal
Model of appraisal/identity of appraisers – others having input
Allocation of time for appraisal
Degree of choice of appraiser
Appeals procedure
Training
Documentation
Access to records
Evidence used, including teaching observation and task evaluation
Initial meeting
Exchange of documents
Location
Identification of outcomes
Levels of monitoring
Levels of evaluation
EFFECTIVENESS
Perceived benefits
Perceived disadvantages
Cost-benefit analysis
Planned changes

TABLE 2: CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION REQUESTED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

420 institutions. This makes it particularly important that the respondents constitute a representative sample with respect to size and type of institution. However, if the questionnaire is sent to all institutions there is no possibility of ensuring this. One possibility would be to send the questionnaire to a representative sub-section of institutions and follow them up actively to encourage a higher response rate. This option was rejected because there is still no guarantee that the sample would be representative, and the database would have been smaller. Also, even if the sample were to be representative with respect to size and type of institution it may not be representative with respect to the data requested.

Colleges which have implemented appraisal schemes are more likely to return the questionnaire than colleges which have not. The results of this survey on the extent of implementation within the sector may therefore be an overestimation.

Survey respondents

The questionnaires were completed by one individual within each institution and therefore represent a particular perspective, usually that of a human resources or staff development professional working in a cross-college capacity.

Human resource specialists may have a more positive perception of the appraisal scheme than other staff. The questionnaire did not collect systematic information about the precise role of the survey respondents, which is a fault of its design.

Quantitative versus qualitative data

The use of a tick box approach to encourage questionnaire completion and simplify analysis means that the data lacks richness. However, a survey of this size has to sacrifice quality for quantity, to some extent. Content analysis has been used to provide meaningful interpretation of some qualitative data, but this brings its own problems. The

identification of appropriate categories is a matter of judgement and will depend upon the perceptions of the individual researcher. The aggregation of the data will again mean loss of detail.

It is helpful to be aware of these methodological limitations. Every effort has been made to address them in the design of the questionnaire and the analysis of the data. Particular difficulties are referred to in the discussion of the findings, where appropriate.

Analysis of data

The questionnaire responses have been analysed as follows:

- quantitative data has been analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, to convert frequency data to percentages — this provides information about the position of colleges with respect to Investors in People Standard, the number of appraisal schemes, the major characteristics of schemes, and the extent to which they have been formally monitored and evaluated
- data in the 'other' category has been checked by reading text boxes to ascertain if any frequently occurring options have been omitted from the tick box options included in the questionnaire; because too few examples of any one option emerged, this data is not analysed in any depth but is referred to, as appropriate, in the discussion of findings
- responses to the open-ended questions about perceived benefits and disadvantages, and about planned changes, have been analysed to identify recurring themes which have then been grouped into categories (keeping an 'an open mind' about those used to avoid bias in interpretation [Bell, 1993]); the frequencies have been converted into percentages to provide quantitative information on these aspects.

Chapter 3

Appraisal: the emerging picture

Out of the 653 institutions sent the questionnaire, 233 replied – a response rate of 36 per cent. The profile of the sample in terms of type and size of institution is shown in Figures 1 and 2 respectively (see Appendix 4). The sample provides a fairly representative cross-section of the total population with respect to size and type. However, it is not necessarily representative with respect to the implementation of appraisal, since colleges which have a scheme are more likely to respond to the questionnaire than those without a scheme. The main findings of the survey are discussed here in the context of the research questions. The data is represented in appropriate graphs in Appendix 4.

Extent of implementation in FE

As shown in Figure 4, a high proportion of colleges completing the questionnaire (94%) have introduced appraisal schemes. The overwhelming majority of these schemes (78%) were introduced between 1992 and 1996, with the major concentration of new schemes (57%) in 1992, 1993 and 1994 (see Figure 5); 16.9 per cent gave no response to this question.

This suggests that schemes have been implemented as a result of the NJC agreement, and that colleges have responded positively to the agreement, despite the changed circumstances and additional workload created by incorporation.

Figure 6 shows that, in many cases, FE colleges have used the opportunity provided by the NJC agreement for appraisal of academic staff to introduce a single scheme for all staff which should promote greater understanding, a shared commitment to strategic objectives and positive working relationships. However, nearly 45 per cent of survey respondents have separate schemes for different categories of staff. Because the NJC appraisal framework was agreed rather than imposed and has taken account of a range of perspectives, and of the need for appraisees to have ownership, schemes for all staff have the potential to make a positive impact.

Characteristics of appraisal schemes

Strategic context

Figure 8 shows that the two main objectives of FE appraisal schemes are to address staff development needs (92% of schemes) and identify targets linked with organisational objectives (70% of schemes). Respondents were asked to assign a rating from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much) to indicate the level to which their scheme was designed to meet the specified purpose. There is little evidence of schemes being designed to link with individual or group performance-related pay: for more than 70 per cent of schemes this was described as non-applicable; 14 per cent of respondents gave no response, and 12 per cent said that their schemes were linked with performance-related pay to a small extent.

This suggests that colleges see staff development and the setting of clear targets as more effective in improving performance than the use of extrinsic motivators such as performance-related pay. This fits with what the general and the FE-specific appraisal literature suggest is

appropriate for organisations whose major business is teaching and the promotion of learning. For example, Long (1986) found in his survey of 250 schemes that:

> *Despite assumptions to the contrary, there is no evidence to show a growth in the use of performance review for the assessment of salary increases and merit awards.*

More recently, Fletcher (1993), despite reporting Bevan and Thompson's (1991) finding that performance-related pay has increased 'in recent years', states that:

> *both research and experience indicate that this* (ie performance-related pay) *can create many pitfalls in constructing an effective appraisal scheme.*

The relationship between the specific purposes of appraisal and its overall aim of improving institutional quality needs to be considered in the context of the extent to which it contributes to the achievement of the college's strategic objectives. If appraisal schemes with the explicit purposes of staff development and meeting targets are also to enhance quality of service they must:

- carry out the review of individual performance, the identification of staff development needs, and the setting of targets linked to organisational objectives in the context of improving quality of service
- take into account the perspectives of students and other college clients with respect to the quality of service
- make links with other quality review mechanisms such as course/programme review, section/departmental review and institutional review, including college inspection
- have effective mechanisms for linking appraisal outcomes (whether staff development outcomes or targets linked with organisational objectives) with, and therefore ensuring they contribute to, organisational performance.

The position of colleges in the sample with respect to the Investors in People Standard gives some indication of the context in which appraisal is undertaken, since the Standard requires institutions to review staff development needs in the context of business objectives.

Figure 3 shows that 65 per cent of participating colleges have committed themselves to the Standard, and 30 per cent have obtained it. This suggests an understanding of the need to review staff development needs in the context of strategic objectives, although it provides more evidence of intention than of achievement.

In the context of the strategic role of appraisal in enhancing institutional quality, the actual achieving of the Investors in People Standard is an important factor. As Smith (1995) states:

> *the Standard, if approached sensibly, is an excellent tool for ensuring that human resource tactics deliver an organisation's strategy more effectively.*

The extent to which contribution to organisational performance is identified as a benefit of staff appraisal sheds further light on the role appraisal is playing at a strategic level. Table 7 (see page 45) shows that 42 per cent of schemes identified this as a benefit. A range of other benefits for organisational performance are also identified. This is encouraging, although Table 3 shows that the overall number of statements about benefits for organisational performance is substantially lower than the number of statements about benefits for the appraisers or for appraisees. However, these are the perceptions of survey respondents only. Figure 27 shows that only 20 per cent of schemes have been formally evaluated to identify benefits for organisational performance. This is probably more due to the difficult nature of carrying out such evalu-

Type of benefit	Number of statements
Benefits to appraisee	631
Benefits to appraiser	483
Benefits to team	263
Benefits to organisation	337

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF STATEMENTS ABOUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF BENEFITS

ation (as revealed by the literature review) than a lack of interest in organisational benefits. Despite this, consideration of Table 4 suggests that the potential of appraisal outcomes to make a strategic contribution to organisational performance is not yet fully achieved.

Design, implementation and evaluation

A scheme is more likely to contribute to staff development, the achievement of targets linked with organisational objectives and the overall aim of enhancing the service if appraisal is carried out in such a way as to be motivating, credible and effective. The attitudes of appraisers and appraisees towards appraisal will have a direct impact on the effectiveness of schemes (Anderson and Barnett, 1987).

The 1991 NJC framework for FE appraisal schemes was carefully developed to achieve the aims of motivation, credibility and effectiveness. It reflects good practice with respect to the design, implementation and evaluation of appraisal schemes, identified in the literature. It is therefore helpful to consider the findings of this survey in the context of the relevant NJC framework recommendations. Table 4 provides a profile of the survey results against the NJC framework.

Models of appraisal

Appraisals are overwhelmingly (82%) carried out by line managers or other managers. Only two per cent of schemes are 360° appraisal models which involve a range of perspectives (Figure 12 gives the details).

The extent to which customers have an input is important. Figure 13b shows that this does happen to some extent, with students having an input to 15 per cent of schemes, and other college clients having an input to seven per cent of schemes. However, for many schemes none of these groups have an input. The majority of additional inputs come from managers (in 39% of schemes) and peers (in 27% of schemes), rather than from customers.

TABLE 4: PROFILE OF SURVEY RESULTS AGAINST NJC FRAMEWORK

Characteristic	NJC recommendation	Survey findings	Comment
Participation in scheme	Participation required for all full-time academic staff and all part-time academic staff on proportional contracts	Participation compulsory in 83% of schemes, voluntary in 4% and compulsory for some staff in 6% of schemes	Survey findings generally in line with NJC framework
Identity of appraiser	To be determined by governing body; to meet specific criteria: sound knowledge and understanding of appraisee's work; knowledge of procedures and developments within each institution; be in a position to ensure agreed outcomes are processed	Line manager is appraiser in 68% of schemes; other manager in 14% of schemes; peer appraisal in 8% of schemes	Substantial evidence of line management model, which has the potential to meet identified criteria
Choice of appraiser	Appraisees should be offered an alternative choice of appraiser	Constrained choice in 52% of schemes, free choice in 4% of schemes, and no choice in 27% of schemes. Schemes with no choice do not meet NJC agreement	Some choice, so combines strategic link with a degree of flexibility; however, schemes with no choice may be indirectly discriminatory

Characteristic	NJC recommendation	Survey findings	Comment
Overall aim and purposes; strategic context	Schemes should aim to enhance the quality of the service provided by the institution; professional development of staff to be seen in the context of institutional and unit development plans; links with institutional and departmental review essential	Primary purposes of schemes are staff development and targets linked with organisational objectives; major benefits include staff development, communication and (although more limited) contribution to organisational objectives	Purposes and identified benefits of schemes suggest they make a significant contribution to meeting overall aim, although more at an individual than an organisational level
Relationship with other procedures	Schemes should be complementary to, but must be separate from, disciplinary, probation, pay and promotion procedures	Strong evidence of complete separation from the following procedures: disciplinary, grievance, capability, pay, promotion and references	Survey findings suggest that good practice laid down in NJC agreement is closely followed
Teaching observation	Evaluation of individual's effectiveness in the facilitation of learning should be included. Decision about class-room observation left to local schemes	Teaching observation included in 64% of schemes. Task evaluation included in 54% of schemes	Findings reflect NJC framework and demonstrate a significant commitment of resources to a thorough approach to appraisal

Characteristic	NJC recommendation	Survey findings	Comment
Other evidence	Relevant data should include information from college and unit reviews; job descriptions; teaching and/or task evaluation records; previous appraisal records	Evidence used: review of previous appraisal 70%; section reviews 30%; inspection feedback 29%; and course reviews 9%	Findings reflect NJC framework
Training	Access to training required for all participants. No recommendation about whether training for appraisers and appraisees should be joint or separate	Training provided in 92% of schemes; appraisers provided with more training on average than appraisees. Appraisers and appraisees trained together in 29% of schemes, and separately in 43% of schemes (some used both approaches)	High level of training provided; the survey findings reflect, in general, the good practice in the NJC framework
Self-appraisal	Completion by appraisee of locally standardised self-appraisal exercise	90% of schemes include self-appraisal form for appraisee	Self-appraisal makes a significant contribution to the process, as required by the framework

Characteristic	NJC recommendation	Survey findings	Comment
Outcomes	An agreed record focusing on outcomes and objectives is required	Staff development outcomes are identified for 93% of schemes; other objectives are identified for 81% of schemes. Full details of outcomes are recorded less frequently	There is a clear understanding of the need to record outcomes; however, the full intentions of the framework are not always achieved in this respect
Monitoring and evaluation	Arrangements for monitoring and regular evaluation are required to be made locally, with respect to number of detailed aspects of appraisal	Monitoring to ensure that appraisal is taking place occurs in 96% of schemes. Monitoring of outcome identification, implementation and review takes place in 67%, 52% and 50% of schemes respectively. Evaluation to identify benefits at different levels has taken place as follows: appraisees 40%, appraisers 35%, group/team performance 7% and organisational performance 14%. Cost-benefit analysis has occurred for 7% of schemes	Although some monitoring of appraisal is taking place this is happening to a lesser degree and in a less detailed way than envisaged by the framework

Characteristic	NJC recommendation	Survey findings	Comment
Frequency	Framework requires regular appraisal, at least every two years, but recommends more frequent appraisal if resources are available	Appraisal is annual for 48% of schemes and every two years for 41% of schemes	An encouraging number of schemes are annual. Framework requirements and recommendations are both reflected in findings
Complaints/ appeals	Local procedure required for hearing and disposing of any complaint about the appraisal process or conclusions	76% of schemes have appeals procedures; procedures are known to have been used in only 10% of schemes. 15% of schemes report no appeals procedure	In general, survey findings reflect NJC framework, although the number of schemes which do not meet the requirement to have an appeals procedure is surprisingly high
Initial meeting	Initial meeting between appraiser and appraisee is required unless both agree it is unnecessary	87% of schemes have provision for a pre-meeting, which takes place in the majority of cases	Survey findings reflect the NJC framework
Access to appraisal reports	Agreed appraisal record kept in appraisee's confidential personnel record; additional copies available to appraisee and appraiser	Access to full appraisal records is in general confined to appraiser and appraisee, although in a minority of cases principal and personnel managers have access	Survey findings reflect the high level of confidentiality in framework requirements and demonstrate awareness of the sensitivity of this issue

Link with other quality review mechanisms

There is strong evidence that appraisal is informed by targets identified in previous appraisal rounds (in 70% of schemes). Figures 21a and 21b give the details. This suggests a continuous quality improvement approach, building on previous achievements. There is evidence of a link between the review of performance at an individual level and section reviews (occurs in 30% of schemes). Course reviews contribute in nine per cent of schemes and institutional reviews (such as college inspections) in 29 per cent of schemes. Appraisal is also shown to be informed by the observation of teaching (for 64% of schemes) and the evaluation of other tasks carried out by appraisees (for 54% of schemes) – see Figure 20.

All of these sources of evidence can make a valuable contribution to performance review. The NJC pilot schemes revealed that teaching observation is an important learning experience for observers and those observed, but is also resource intensive (Lee, 1991). It is encouraging that the majority of schemes in the survey involve teaching observation as part of the review process, despite the high resource implications.

Design and implementation

The findings of this research suggest that the FE appraisal schemes do, in practice, reflect closely the NJC framework in many aspects of design and implementation (see Table 4). Given the high degree of good practice reflected in the NJC framework, this result is encouraging. It means that appraisal schemes in further education have been designed and implemented to play a strategic role by combining the development of the individual with a contribution to organisational performance. It suggests that:

- appraisees have taken an appropriate degree of ownership of the process
- the appropriate balance of structure and flexibility has been generally achieved

- the development and implementation of schemes has taken account of staff development and business needs in the context of the FE culture.

The two main aspects which do not reflect recommended good practice are ones which are more difficult to deal with, namely:

- setting appraisal schemes in the wider context of unit and institutional review
- the extent and level of detail of monitoring and evaluation.

However, the survey does reveal a high level of awareness of the need for development in these areas, and evidence of development in progress (see Tables 10 and 11 on page 49).

Effective mechanisms

The extent to which appraisal outcomes of various types are identified, recorded and monitored is shown in Figure 24. This data suggests that a high percentage (70-90%) of schemes involve identifying and recording specific outcomes. There is some drop-off between identification and recording and between recording and monitoring, but it is not great. Figure 25 shows the different details recorded for the two main outcomes, those linked to staff development needs and those linked to organisational targets. With respect to staff development and targets linked to organisational objectives, the action to be taken is recorded more frequently (78-91% of schemes) than the person(s) responsible (in approximately 70-80% of schemes) or the timescale (in approximately 70-80% of schemes). This information is recorded more frequently than a review mechanism for an identified outcome (in approximately 50-60% of schemes). The cost of implementing these outcomes is only recorded in approximately 20 per cent of schemes. This finding is compatible with Anderson's (1993) report in which he states that:

> *even in well organised and well run appraisal systems only a proportion of actions planned and agreed by appraisers and appraisees subsequently are implemented.*

Evaluation

Approximately 40 per cent of schemes evaluate benefits for the appraisee, and almost as many evaluate benefits for the appraiser (35% of schemes). There is a much lower level of evaluation at the organisational level (in only 14% of schemes). Figure 27 gives the details. This suggests that the focus of evaluation is at the individual level, and that appraisal is not always being considered in the context of the overall aim of enhancing institutional quality.

Effectiveness of appraisal

Analysis of statements about the perceived benefits and disadvantages of appraisal reinforces the emphasis that these schemes place on the individual. Table 3 shows that there are far more statements about benefits identified for the appraisee and appraiser than for the team or the organisation as a whole. The nature of the benefits are more strongly focused on the purposes of staff development. However, targets linked with organisational objectives are also frequently identified as a benefit, and there is some evidence of the strategic role of appraisal in benefiting organisational performance.

Benefits for the appraisee

The nature of benefits identified for appraisees (see Table 5) reflects strongly the two major purposes of the scheme: meeting staff development needs and identifying targets linked with organisational objectives. These findings provide strong evidence that appraisal schemes are meeting their identified purposes (particularly since they are the result of content analysis on open-ended questions, rather than of the selection of pre-identified options).

The second most important benefit identified is the opportunity for communication between appraiser and appraisee (usually the appraisee's line manager). This emphasises the importance of investing in people in order to enhance the quality of their contribution. It is an

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Staff development	An opportunity to identify staff development needs and how they are to be met	155	57
Communication/ relationships	An opportunity for communication with the appraisee's line manager providing an in-depth dialogue and exchange of views, attention and quality time	109	40
Objectives linked to work role	Identification of individual work-related objectives	73	27
Performance review and improvement	Review of performance, leading to improved performance	55	20
Role	Review and clarification of role	46	17
Recognition	Recognition of achievements of appraisee	36	13
Motivation	Improved morale, a greater sense of value and belonging, and increased motivation and commitment	36	13
Influence	Opportunity to influence developments and contribute to planning	35	13
Career development	Opportunity to identify and communicate career aspirations	28	10
Resources/ support	Access to support/resources/ improved working arrangements	25	9
Feedback	Feedback on performance from the line manager (appraiser)	23	8
Relationships	Building relationships between line manager (appraiser) and appraisee	15	6
Organisational objectives	Greater awareness of organisational objectives	10	4

TABLE 5: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF APPRAISAL FOR APPRAISEES

important factor to take into account when identifying quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefits for cost-benefit analysis of appraisal schemes. The range of appraisee benefits identified in Table 5 reflects those identified by Anderson (1993). They show that appraisal schemes in FE have succeeded in blending developmental and evaluative aspects of appraisal so that they complement rather than conflict with each other.

Benefits for the appraiser

The most striking features of benefits identified for appraisers (see Table 6) are the extent to which appraisal increases their awareness of the content of their staff's jobs and the quality of their performance. The other main benefit identified is the contribution appraisal makes to the appraiser's development of management and communication skills. Given the relatively low levels of investment in management development in the UK, this result is not surprising. This benefit should certainly be considered when conducting cost-benefit analysis to identify the extent to which appraisal is a worthwhile investment.

Benefits for organisational performance

Although there were fewer statements identifying benefits for organisational performance (see Table 7), the contribution of individual objectives to the meeting of organisational objectives emerged strongly as a perceived benefit for 42 per cent of schemes. This indicates that appraisal schemes do play some role at a strategic level, as Anderson (1993) and others have suggested that they should. However, the relatively small number of references to the contribution of appraisal to the achieving of the Investors in People Standard (seven statements) – with its focus on a strategic approach to staff appraisal – and to improving the learning experience for students (22 statements), reinforces the finding that appraisal outcomes have had more impact at the individual than at the organisational level.

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Appraiser awareness of issues	Greater awareness of issues which concern and interest staff, and of their priorities and aspirations	155	57
Appraiser awareness of jobs	Greater awareness of the content of staff jobs and more information about their section of the organisation	136	50
Appraiser awareness of performance	Greater awareness of staff performance	78	29
Appraiser development	Development of the appraiser's communication and management skills	53	19
Staff development	Opportunity to identify staff development needs more effectively	47	17
Planning	More informed planning	41	15
Communications/ relationships	Better communication with appraisees, the opportunity for dialogue; building relationships between line manager and appraisee	61	22
Recognition	Opportunity to recognise staff achievements	36	13
Individual objectives	Opportunity to agree individual work-related objectives	25	9
Relationships	Improved management/staff relationships	23	8
Feedback	Opportunity to review performance and provide feedback to staff	23	8
Roles	Review and clarification of appraisee roles	23	8
Team development	More effective teams	15	6
Organisational objectives	Communication of college objectives and priorities	11	4
Performance	Improved staff performance	8	3
Motivation	More motivated staff	4	1

TABLE 6: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF APPRAISAL FOR APPRAISERS

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Organisational objectives	Individual objectives contribute to meeting of organisational objectives	113	42
Staff development	Staff development needs inform the strategic plan and link to organisational objectives	42	15
Planning	More informed and more effective deployment of staff and resources	38	14
Motivation	Increased motivation, sense of belonging and commitment	29	11
Strategic link	Effective appraisal contributes to meeting strategic objectives	29	11
Student experience/ quality of service	Improved learning experience for students	22	8
Communication	Improved communication throughout organisation	14	5
Improved performance	Improved individual performance contributes to organisational performance	13	5
Culture	Development of a more open culture, partly as a result of a single scheme for all staff	10	4
Team performance	Improved team performance	7	3
Monitoring	Mechanism for monitoring progress against targets	7	3
Investors in People	Contributes to the achieving of the Investors In People Standard	7	3
Productivity	Greater productivity	6	2

TABLE 7: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF APPRAISAL FOR ORGANISATIONS

Benefits for teams

Hartle (1995) refers to team appraisal as having significant potential in contributing to staff motivation and organisational performance. Although there are fewer statements identifying benefits from appraisal for teams (263 in total – see Table 8), they do provide some evidence of the positive impact within the organisation of appraisal at this level. Interestingly, there are more statements identifying motivation as an appraisal benefit for teams (43) than as a benefit for individual appraisees (36), appraisers (4) or organisations (29). There is room for further development which builds on the potentially motivating effect of a team approach to appraisal. This development would fit well with the focus on the establishment of self-improving teams as part of the self-assessment process (see, for example, Dixon, 1996).

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Team objectives	Team objectives are identified in the context of organisational objectives: individual objectives complement team objectives	51	19
Improved performance	Increased effectiveness of team performance	50	18
Motivation	Greater team spirit and commitment to shared goals	43	16
Awareness of performance	Teams have a greater awareness of their performance and evaluate their activities more	32	12
Staff development	Team development needs are identified and addressed	27	10
Communication	Improved communication within and between teams	24	9
Planning	More effective planning of team activities	18	7
Strategic link	Team performance contributes more effectively to meeting strategic objectives	11	4
Student experience/ quality of service	Better quality of service for students and improved learning experience	7	3

TABLE 8: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF APPRAISAL FOR TEAMS

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Time	Appraisal makes very heavy demands on staff time, particularly for appraisers and those responsible for managing and administering the schemes	79	29
Lack of commitment	Lack of interest, no real commitment or actual hostility	57	21
No strategic link	Information from appraisal is not linked with other organisational procedures	44	16
Evaluation	Schemes are difficult to evaluate	29	11
Unfulfilled expectations	Schemes raise expectations by promising outcomes which are not implemented, causing demotivation and lack of credibility	28	10
Bureaucracy	Schemes are bureaucratic – unwieldy, awkward and cumbersome	16	6
Variable appraiser skills	Schemes rely heavily for their quality on the skills of appraisers, which vary considerably	15	6
Workload	Schemes make unreasonably high demands on workload, particularly for some appraisers	12	4
Paper-dominated	An excess of forms and other documentation	9	3
Too infrequent	Biennial schemes found not to be very satisfactory	9	3
Model	Schemes are perceived to be too 'soft', not judgemental enough and giving staff too much choice	6	2
Inappropriate coverage	Coverage of scheme not appropriate	6	2
Stress	Additional workload is stressful	5	2

TABLE 9: PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES OF APPRAISAL

Disadvantages of appraisal

Colleges see the heavy time demand that appraisal puts on staff as the main disadvantage – this was the most frequent response with 79 statements. Table 9 shows the other responses made. None of the planned changes identified (see Table 10) address the time demand issue directly, although there is evidence of plans to simplify appraisal schemes (the most frequently mentioned planned change with 27 statements). Given the perceived contribution to appraisers' development, the time invested in appraisal would seem to be justified, and should perhaps be more properly allowed for. The perceived lack of commitment to schemes (57 statements) may be partly a result of severe time pressures as well as other factors. Continued improvements to schemes and ongoing development of appraiser skills should in the long term help to reduce the time demands. The other most frequently mentioned disadvantages are the lack of a link between appraisal and other organisational procedures (44 statements), and the difficulty of evaluating appraisal (29 statements), both of which have already been discussed. The changes that survey participants plan to effect (as indicated in Table 10) show that the disadvantages identified with respect to bureaucracy, frequency, purpose and coverage of the appraisal scheme are being addressed.

Cost-benefit analysis

Figure 28 indicates that only seven per cent of schemes have carried out cost-benefit analysis. A review of the comments made by respondents on this issue suggests that many institutions perceive cost-benefit analysis in simple terms only, interpreting the question as meaning actual cost of the scheme, or looking at it from the point of view of the number of days middle managers have to commit to appraisal, without analysing the cost. There is no evidence of comprehensive cost-benefit analysis involving the identification of quantifiable benefits and costs, but this could be due to colleges misinterpreting the question rather than providing an accurate picture as to how many colleges carry out such an analysis.

Category	Benefit	Number of statements	Percentage of schemes
Simplify scheme	Simplify scheme procedures and/or simplify documentation	27	10
Strategic link	Link appraisal scheme more closely with other quality approval systems and organisational planning processes	27	10
Co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation	Improve management of the system, particularly with respect to monitoring and evaluation	26	10
Refocus purpose	Focus more on objective setting in addition to staff development	25	9
Frequency	Move to annual appraisal, rather than biennial	20	7
Broaden model	Broaden the sources of information used to inform appraisal, including the introduction of teaching observation, 360° appraisal, upward appraisal and peer appraisal	20	7
Extend coverage	Extend coverage of scheme from full-time academic staff to all staff	16	6
Move to single scheme	Integrate existing schemes for academic and support staff into a single scheme for all staff	11	4
Line management model	Make greater use of line managers as appraisers	9	3
Improve training	Improve training to prepare staff for appraisal	5	2

TABLE 10: NATURE OF PLANNED CHANGES TO APPRAISAL SCHEMES

	Number of statements
Appraisal review has already taken place	9
Appraisal review is currently taking place	7
Appraisal review is planned	23
Appraisal review is ongoing, as are changes to the scheme	18

TABLE 11: EXTENT OF EVALUATION OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES

Chapter 4

Implications of findings

Results of this survey offer an encouraging picture of widespread successful implementation of appraisal in the FE sector. That this has been achieved over a relatively short period in the early 1990s, following significant difficulties in the latter half of the 1980s, is a powerful endorsement of the role of joint negotiation, and the value of taking principles of good practice seriously, via the introduction of the NJC framework. Table 4 summarises the research findings in the context of this framework, revealing the extent to which colleges have adopted the aspects of good practice put forward.

Findings testify to the positive contribution appraisal can make to individual and organisational performance. The relatively high survey response rate is in itself an indication of interest in the ongoing development and use of appraisal within the sector. However, there is more evidence of this potential being realised at the individual than at the organisational level. The strategic role that appraisal can play in enhancing the quality of service provided by FE institutions could be developed further. Appraisal needs to be informed by a wider range of sources and there should be more systematic evaluation of the contribution it can make to organisational performance.

The findings reinforce the view of Yeates (1990) that it is 'notoriously difficult' to evaluate the contribution appraisal can make to organisational performance. The awareness that at least some survey respondents have of the need for such an evaluation (see Table 11) is encouraging, given that such awareness is low in all sectors. It provides indirect evidence of the beneficial effect of the strategic role given to appraisal by the introduction of the Investors in People Standard.

This difficulty with evaluation points to the need for more research into what aspects of the design of an appraisal scheme allow it to make a contribution at a strategic level. At the same time, the move within the FE sector to achieve continuous self-improvement and develop the overall quality of the college, should make evaluation of staff appraisal schemes a more straightforward process.

The introduction of self-assessment within the FEFC inspection process (see FEFC circulars 97/12 and 97/13) provides the means to make a link between quality at the individual staff performance level and quality of the performance of the institution as a whole.

Colleges already using teaching observation as an element of their performance review are in a good position to make this link, and according to the survey findings this is the case for many FE institutions. Colleges without this in place will find it difficult to undertake self-assessment of teaching and learning.

Since the process is expensive, colleges will need to consider whether they can use one observation framework for the purposes of appraisal and self-assessment. Given the care that has been taken to maintain confidentiality of records of teaching observation, as revealed by this research, it is vital that this issue is approached sensitively. Colleges would benefit from involving relevant professional associations. In this way they will be able to repeat the good practice adopted by the NJC framework at a national level (NATFHE, 1991; page 33) when negotiating the appraisal framework for academic staff.

The research has revealed that one of the main disadvantages of appraisal perceived by colleges is the immense time demands it makes on staff, who are already dealing with stressful workloads, and that the time intensiveness of the process is a main cause of lack of commitment to schemes.

In the absence of a high level of cost-benefit analysis, additional time allocation for appraisal may be difficult to justify. The positive results that appraisal brings may be at the cost of unreasonably high workloads for some appraisers. This factor needs to be considered in the context of the human and economic consequences of high stress levels and the employers' responsibilities in this area.

Colleges need to decide how seriously they want to take appraisal. The many benefits it offers, both at an individual staff and at an organisational level, as revealed by this research, would seem to justify the time that needs to be invested. A cost-benefit analysis would provide colleges with critical information about the potential value that a well-resourced appraisal scheme would bring.

Carrying out such an analysis would also contribute to the drive to adopt a more business-like approach to education. Once the analysis has been made, one desirable approach would then be to incorporate time for appraisal into forward planning.

To ensure that the process is as effective as possible, it is vital that all taking part are prepared for what is involved. The literature review points to the many benefits that training appraisees and appraisers together brings. The staff prefer it, since it establishes a relationship of trust between appraiser and appraisee. In particular it demystifies the process for appraisees, since it makes it more transparent, allowing all participants to be clear about what is involved. It also makes it more likely that appraisees will go into the process viewing it in a positive light, because they see it as a means to improve their objectives and to influence organisational change for the better.

However, this research has shown that nearly half of the participating colleges train staff separately. Colleges tend to give appraisers two days of training, while appraisees are often briefed over a lunchtime meeting. Since there are up to ten times as many appraisees as appraisers, to give appraisees the same amount of training would greatly increase costs.

However, it is desirable to move towards a model of joint training. Colleges with a scheme in place will now be in a better position to achieve this, because new staff coming in will be in much smaller numbers, so it will now be more cost-effective to train them together.

The findings show that most colleges are not complacent about their existing schemes – just a quarter said they had no plans to change their scheme (see Figure 31). This commitment towards bettering their appraisal process could also be seen as evidence that colleges are taking seriously their responsibility towards self-improvement.

Interestingly, the most frequently planned changes were to simplify the scheme and to improve the links with organisational planning, which is further evidence that colleges want to improve the strategic role that appraisal can take, as discussed above.

While the survey did not ask colleges for details on how they planned to effect these changes, observations of schemes subsequent to this survey have indicated that a basic way to simplify a scheme is to reduce the recording processes involved. Many colleges provide a full record of the appraisal interview, as well as of the action plans set. The transcribing involved makes this a time-costly process. However, some colleges just work with action plans without any detriment to the scheme. More colleges could adopt this practice to make their appraisal scheme simpler, at the same time achieving savings in terms of cost and time.

All evidence shows that it is good practice to keep appraisal separate from disciplinary, grievance, capability, promotion and references procedures. The NJC framework recommends that this is the best approach to take. The findings of this research indicate that many colleges have taken this on board when designing their schemes. For

example, more than 70 per cent said that their appraisal scheme was not linked with performance-related pay. This is in line with other developments with respect to performance management in general and offers a useful message to colleges about to design an appraisal scheme.

Evidence from the literature review stresses the value of a 360° model which involves evidence from many sources including students, other college clients, and from course reviews and college inspection. These researchers pointed to the potential this model offers in ensuring that employees meet their performance objectives.

However, evidence from this research shows that in practice this model is very rarely used (in only 2% of cases). Fewer than 30 per cent of schemes used evidence from section reviews and feedback from inspection to contribute to appraisal, and only nine per cent involve evidence from course reviews.

It is likely that colleges have decided that the 360° model makes the appraisal process far more complicated than perhaps is necessary and is too costly to run. The model which emerged as the most popular one was that which involved the line manager carrying out the appraisal. This model of appraisal offers the potential to facilitate a strategic link and meet the criteria identified as good practice by the NJC.

Summary

Implications for appraisal in general

- Findings reinforce the value of appraisal and its potential for making a positive contribution to individual and organisational performance, but show that the latter is difficult to evaluate.
- There is evidence of the beneficial effect of the strategic role given to appraisal by the introduction of the Investors in People Standard.
- Findings endorse the value of joint negotiation and of taking principles of good practice seriously.

Implications for appraisal in the FE sector

- The strategic role that appraisal can have in enhancing FE institutions' quality of service could be further developed.
- There is a need for more systematic evaluation of the contribution appraisal can make to organisational performance.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 3

Survey questionnaire

The questionnaire asked the following questions:

1 Please indicate the college numbers in the following categories:
- full-time students
- part-time students
- full-time staff
- part-time staff

(data presented is for numbers of full time staff)

2 Please indicate the college's position with respect to the Investors in People award:
- have not considered submitting for the award
- have considered submitting for the award but decided against it
- have committed the college to seeking the award
- have the award

3 How many appraisal schemes for staff are there at the college?
- None
- One
- Two
- More than two

4 When was the scheme introduced?

5 Who is covered by this scheme?

6 Is the scheme compulsory or voluntary?

7 To what extent is the scheme designed to meet the following purposes?
- Staff development
- Targets linked with organisational objectives
- Individual performance-related pay
- Group/team performance-related pay
- Other

(Please rate, then specify)

8 Is the scheme separate from the following procedures?
- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Capability
- Pay
- Promotion
- References

9 How often are staff appraised?
- More than once a year
- Once a year
- Every two years
- Other

10 Is there an interim review? If so how often is it carried out?

11 In terms of who carries out individual appraisals, what models does the college use?
- Line manager
- Other manager
- Peer appraisal
- Upward appraisal
- 360° appraisal
- Other (please specify)

12 Who else has input to individuals' appraisals?

- Students
- Subordinates
- Peers
- Managers
- College clients (eg employers)
- Others (please specify)

13 Is there any specific time allocation within staff workloads for carrying out appraisal responsibilities? Please specify number of hours for management staff, and for other staff.

14 Is there any choice of appraiser? If yes, is it a:

- free choice
- constrained choice

15 Is there an appeals procedure? If yes, has it been used?

16 What appraisal training is provided for appraisers? and

17 What appraisal training is provided for appraisees?

- None
- Half-day
- 1 day
- 2 days
- Other

Is it optional/compulsory?

18 If training is provided for appraisers and appraisees, are they trained together or separately?

19 What forms are available for use?

- Preparation form for appraisee
- Preparation form for appraiser
- Full interview recording
- Form for recording all outcomes
- Form for recording just staff development outcomes
- Other (please specify)

20 Who has access to which appraisal forms?

21 Does the scheme include teaching observation/evaluation activities?

22 Does the scheme include task evaluation activities?

23 What other evidence is used for appraisal?

- Section reviews
- Course reviews
- Previous targets
- Previous appraisal records
- Inspection feedback

24 Is a pre-meeting held? and

25 Are appraisal documents exchanged in advance of the appraisal interview?

- Always
- Normally
- Occasionally
- Never

26 What sort of location is used for appraisal interviews?

- Appraiser's office
- Appraisee's office
- Specific rooms
- Other (please specify)

27 Is the scheme designed to include the identification, recording and monitoring of specific outcomes?

- Staff development
- Targets linked with organisational objectives
- Individual performance-related pay
- Group/team performance-related pay
- Other (please specify)

28 Are the following details recorded when outcomes are identified?

- Action to be taken
- Person(s) responsible
- Timescale
- Cost of implementation
- Review mechanism

29 Is the scheme monitored in any of the following ways (and if so how often, by whom, and what action results)?
- To check if appraisal is taking place
- To check if outcomes are identified
- To check if outcomes are reviewed
- To check if outcomes are implemented

30 Has there been any cost-benefit analysis of the scheme? If yes, what are the results?

31 Has the scheme been evaluated in any other way to identify benefits for:
- Individual appraisees?
- Individual appraisers?
- Group/team performance?
- Organisational performance?

32 To what extent do you consider the appraisal scheme benefits the following:
- Individual appraisees?
- Individual appraisers?
- Group/team performance?
- Organisational performance?

If yes, please specify results.

33 What do you think the benefits are:
- to the appraisee?
- to the appraiser?
- to the group/team performance?
- to the organisational performance?
- other?

(Textual responses only – see Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 for analysis)

34 Do you consider the appraisal scheme to have any disadvantages? If yes, what do you consider them to be?
(See also Table 9 for content analysis of textual responses)

35 Are there any plans for changes to the scheme? If yes, can you indicate what the changes might be?
(See also Tables 10 and 11 for content analysis of textual responses)

Appendix 4
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Figure 28 Extent of cost-benefit analysis of appraisal schemes

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Figure 30 Whether or not disadvantages are perceived

Figure 31 Whether or not changes are planned

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Please note – percentages in all of the figures on this and the following page refer to percentage of institutions in the sample

FIGURE 1: TYPES OF FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE SAMPLE

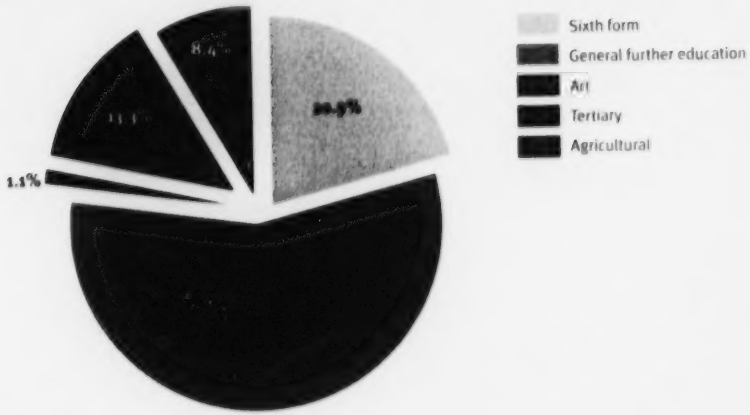


FIGURE 2: SIZE OF FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE SAMPLE, IN TERMS OF THE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME STAFF

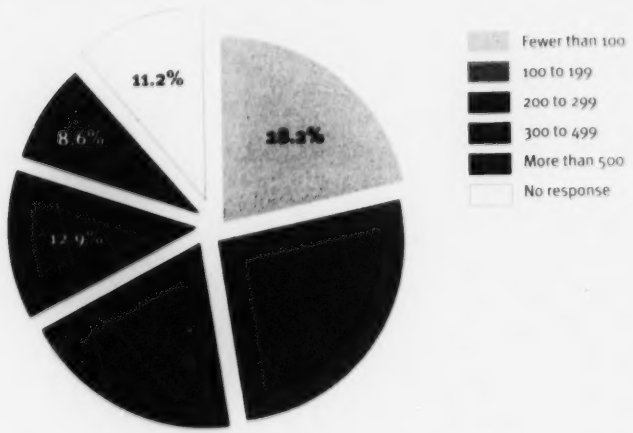


Figure 3: Position of further education colleges with respect to the Investors in People Standard

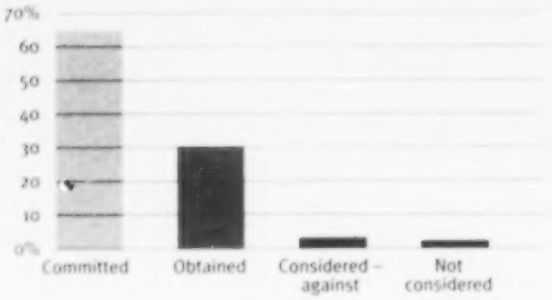
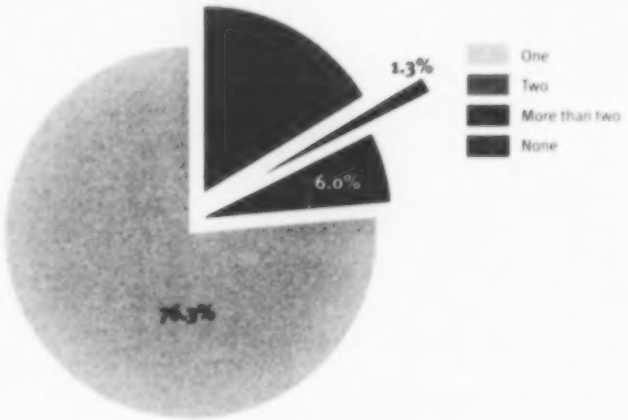


Figure 4: Extent of implementation of appraisal schemes – number of schemes



Please note – percentages in all of the following figures refer to percentage of schemes in the sample

FIGURE 5: YEAR OF INTRODUCTION OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES

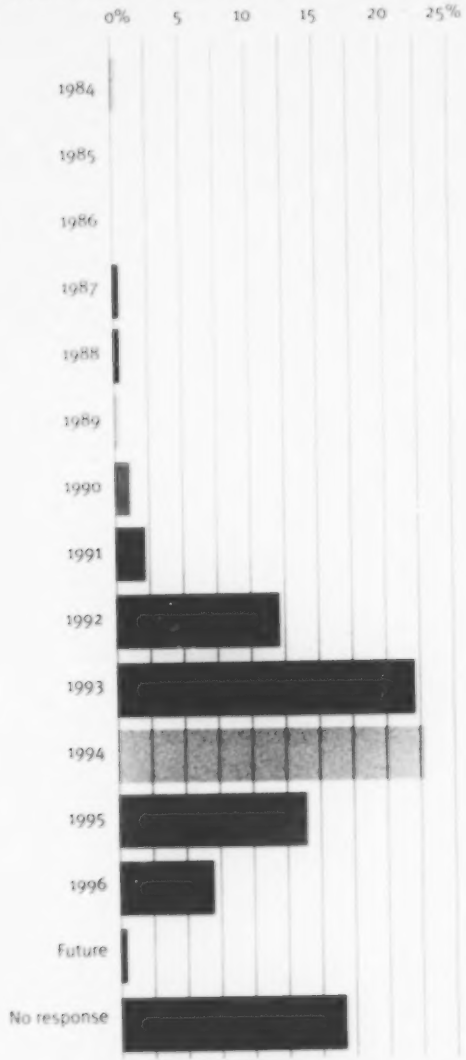


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FIGURE 6: CATEGORIES OF STAFF COVERED BY APPRAISAL SCHEMES

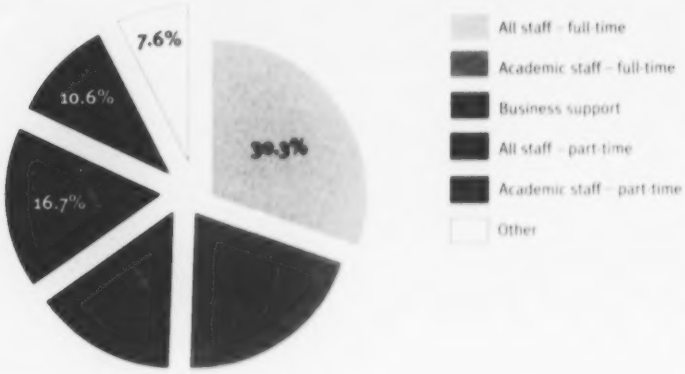

FIGURE 7: EXTENT TO WHICH PARTICIPATION IN APPRAISAL IS COMPULSORY OR VOLUNTARY

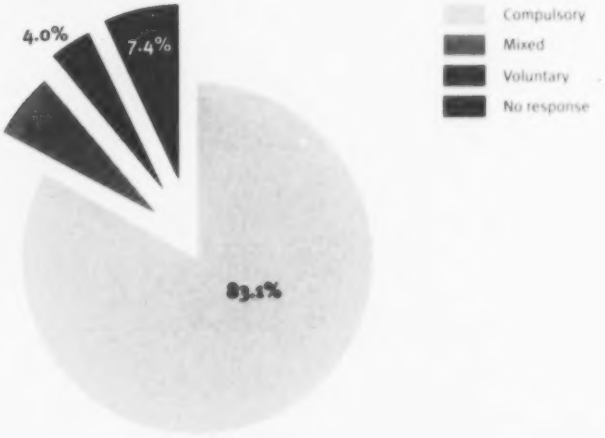

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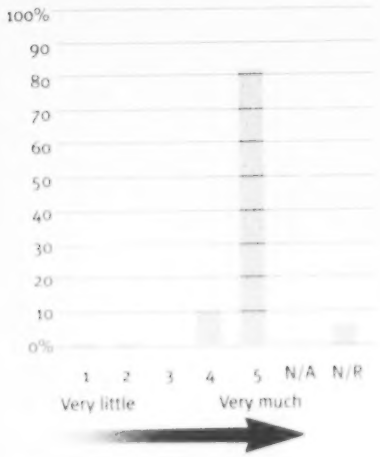
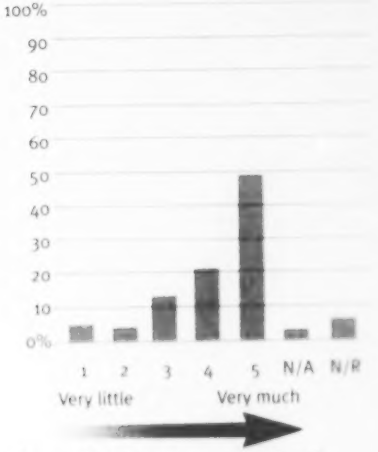
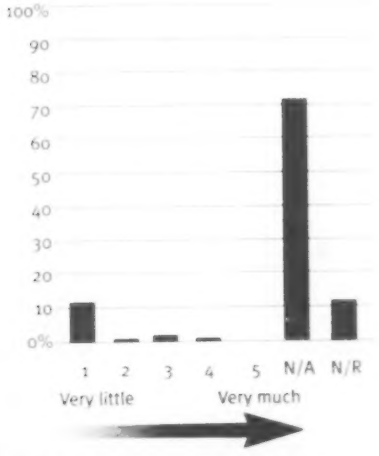
FIGURE 8: EXTENT TO WHICH APPRAISAL SCHEMES ARE DESIGNED TO MEET VARIOUS PURPOSES



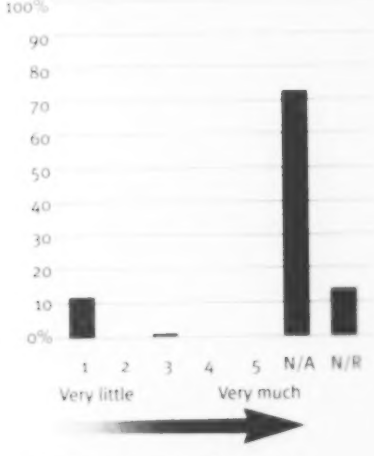
Staff development



Targets linked with organisational objectives



Individual performance-related pay



Group performance-related pay

FIGURE 9: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPRAISAL AND OTHER PROCEDURES (IN TERMS OF IS IT SEPARATE FROM THE PROCEDURE?)

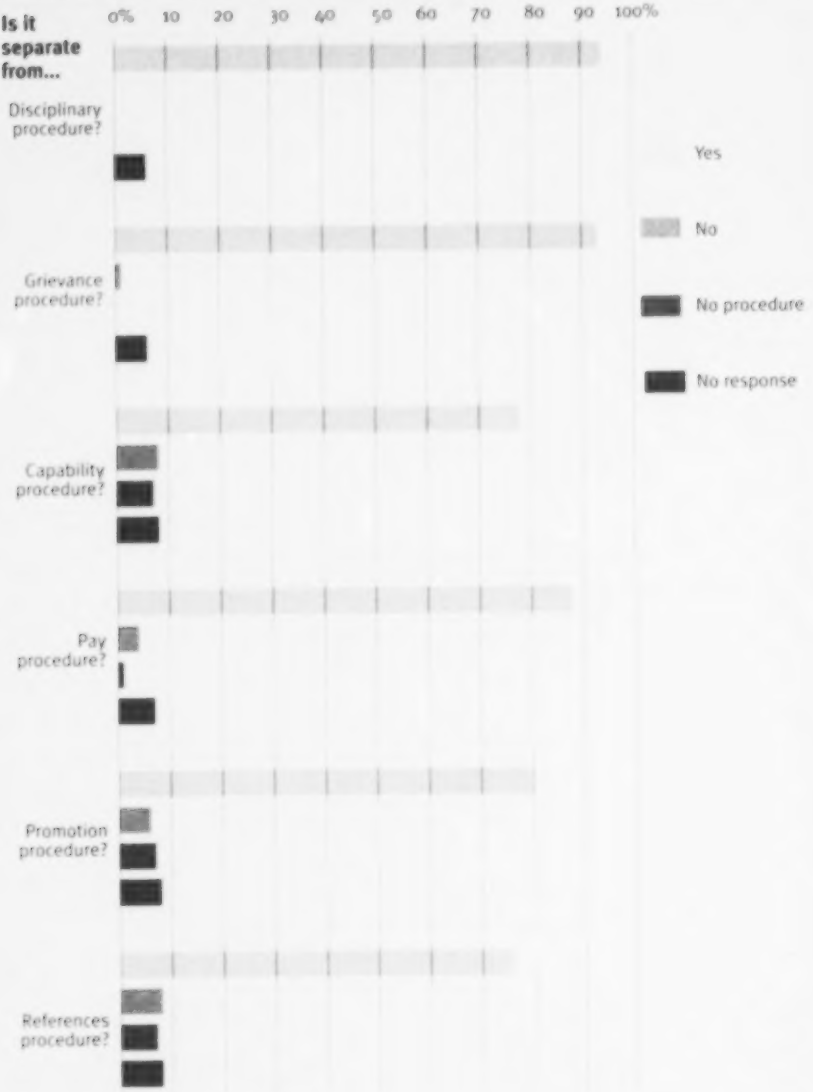


FIGURE 10: HOW OFTEN STAFF ARE APPRAISED

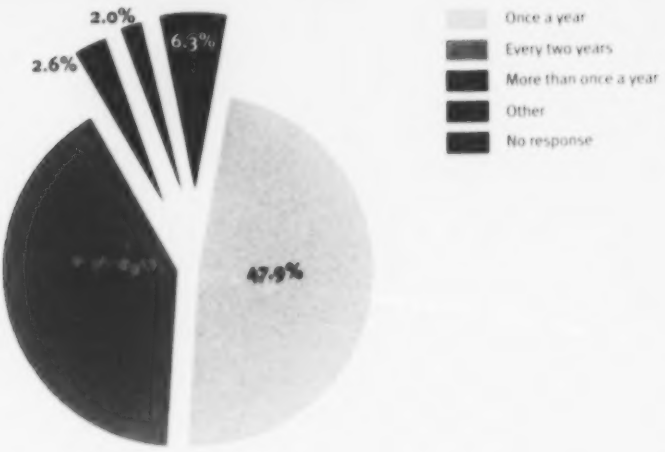


FIGURE 11: EXTENT OF INTERIM REVIEW AS A FEATURE OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES: IS THERE AN INTERIM REVIEW?

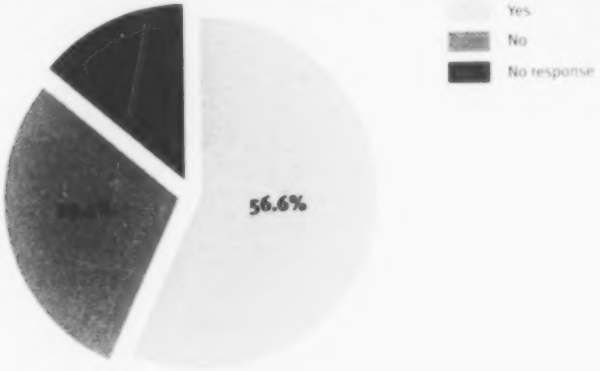


FIGURE 12: MODELS OF APPRAISAL IN FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

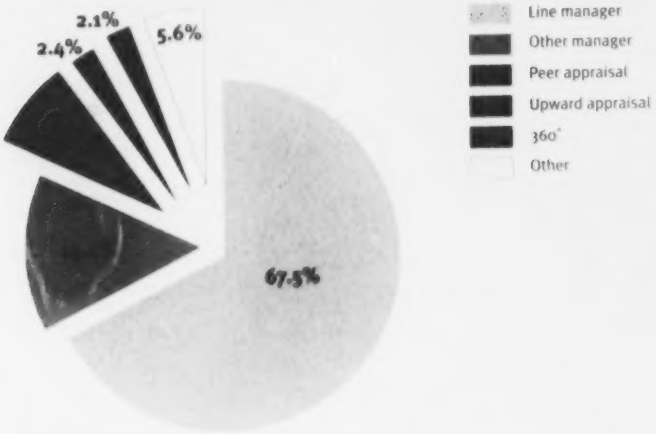
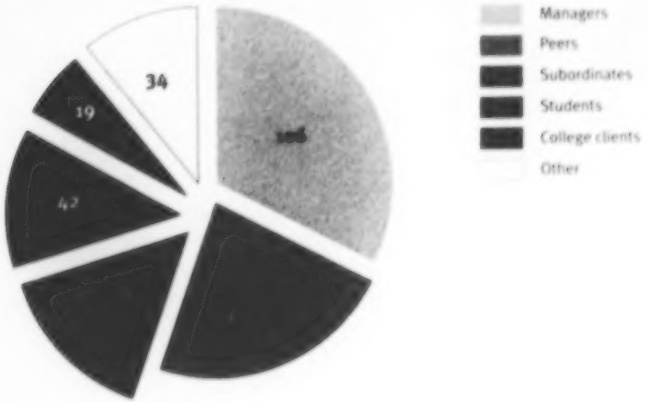
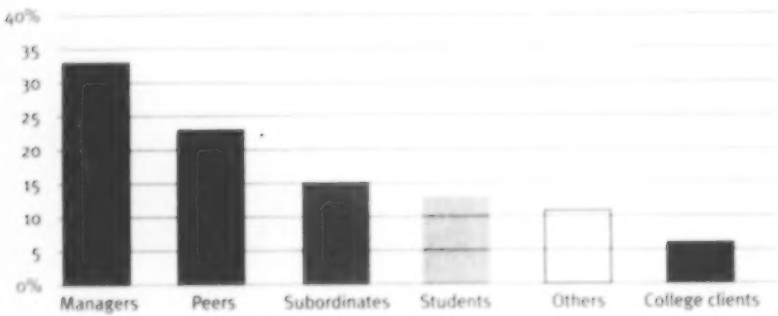


FIGURE 13: OTHERS HAVING INPUT TO THE APPRAISAL SCHEME



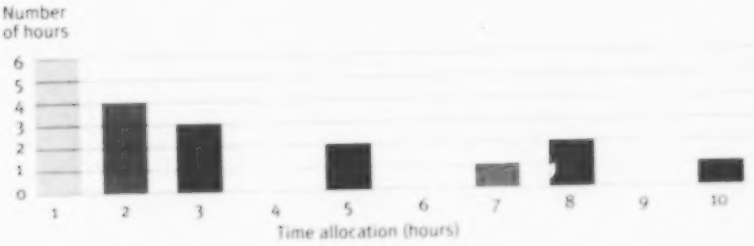
Number of schemes



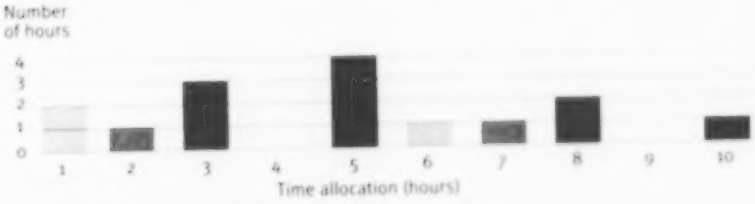
Percentage of schemes

FIGURE 14: TIME ALLOCATION FOR APPRAISAL

Do you allow specific time for appraisal?



Amount of time allocated for management staff



Amount of time allocated for other staff

FIGURE 15: DEGREE OF CHOICE OF APPRAISER

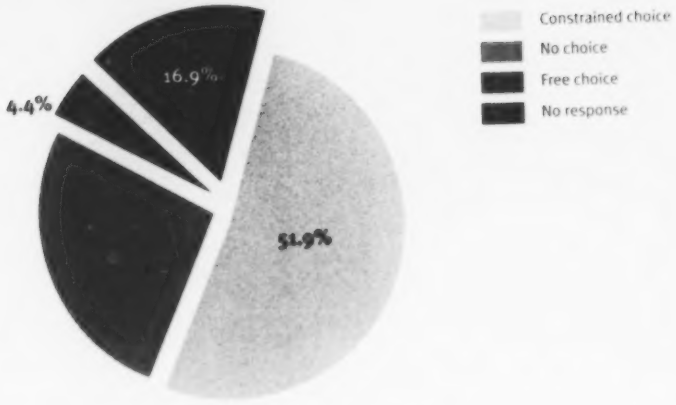


FIGURE 16: EXTENT AND USE OF APPEALS PROCEDURES

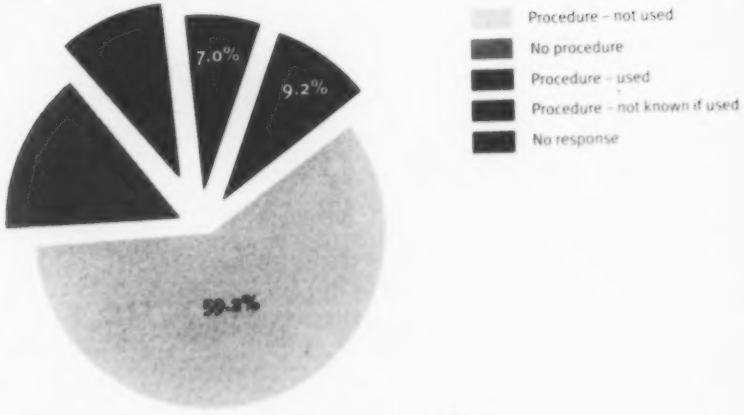


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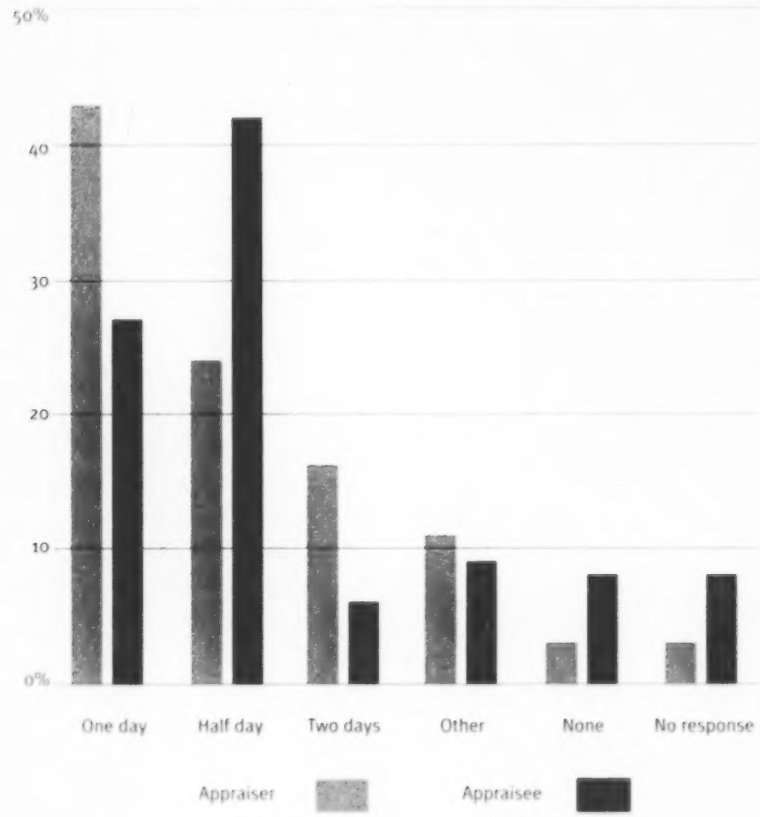
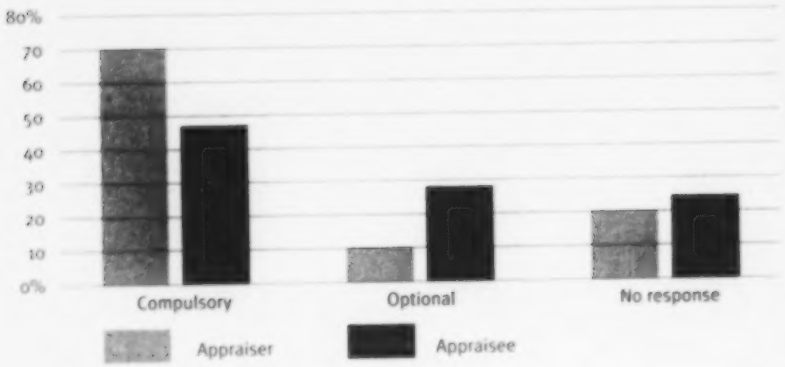
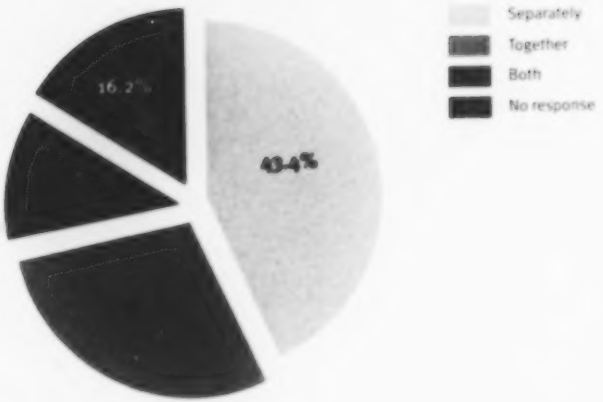
FIGURE 17: TRAINING FOR APPRAISAL



Training provided



Is training optional or compulsory?



Trained together or separately?

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FIGURE 18: TYPES OF APPRAISAL FORMS AVAILABLE FOR USE IN SCHEMES

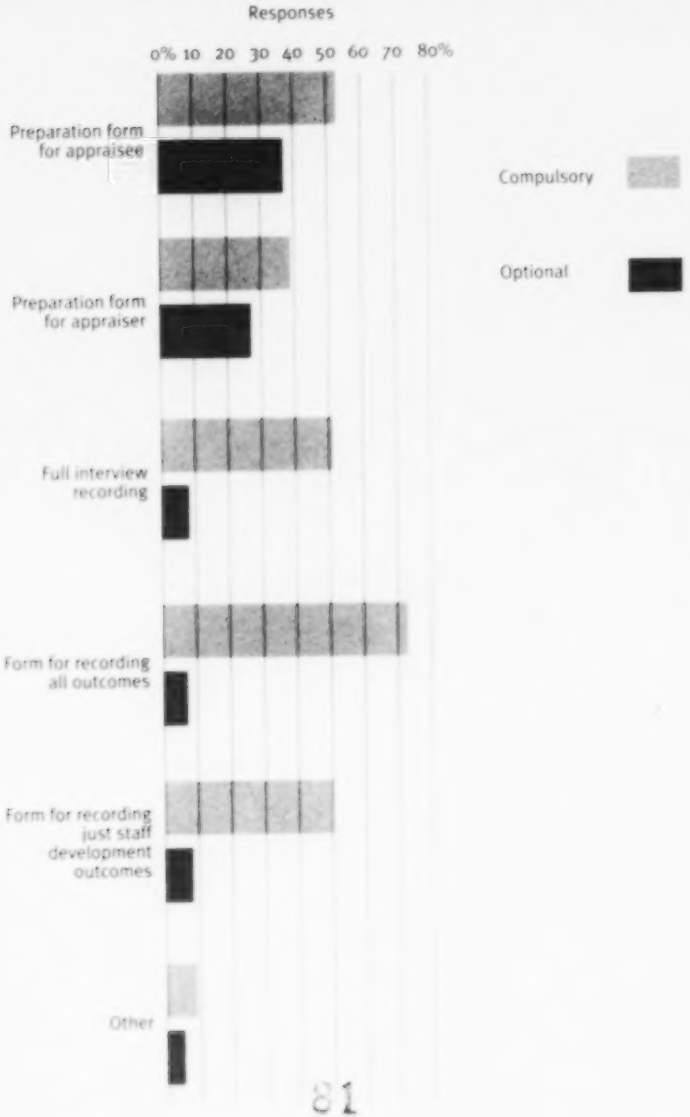

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FIGURE 19: ACCESS TO THE FULL RECORD OF THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

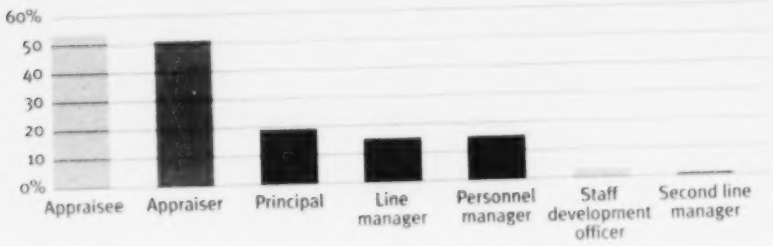
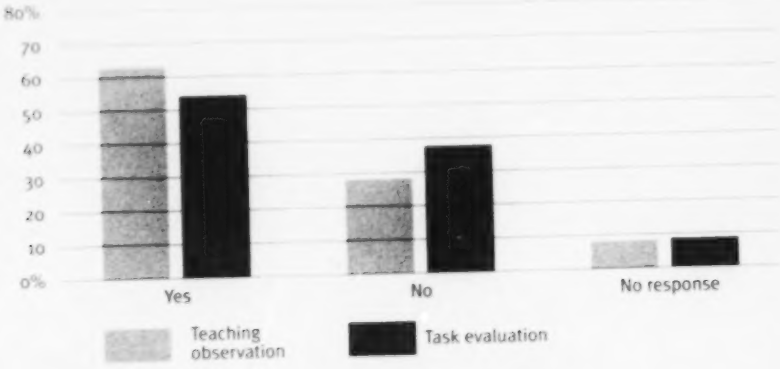
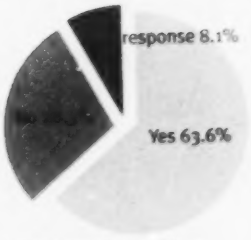
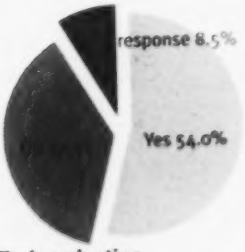


FIGURE 20: EXTENT TO WHICH OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND EVALUATION OF TASKS ARE INCLUDED IN APPRAISAL SCHEMES





Teaching observation



Task evaluation

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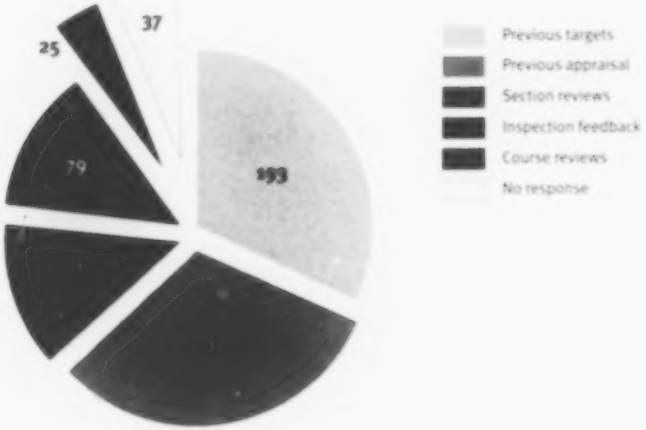
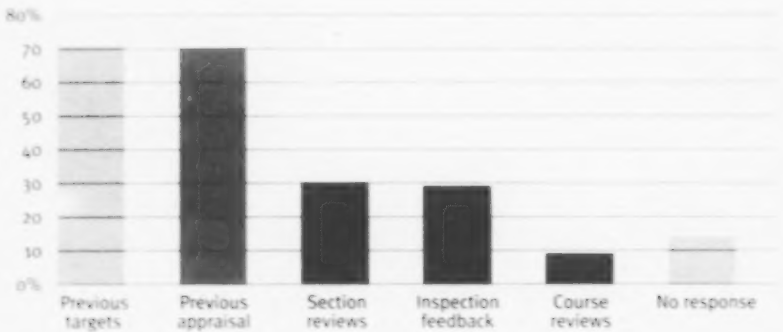
FIGURE 21: EXTENT TO WHICH OTHER EVIDENCE CONTRIBUTES TO THE APPRAISAL PROCESS



Number of schemes



Percentage of schemes

FIGURE 22: APPRAISAL PREPARATION – EXTENT OF PRE-MEETINGS AND EXCHANGE OF DOCUMENTS

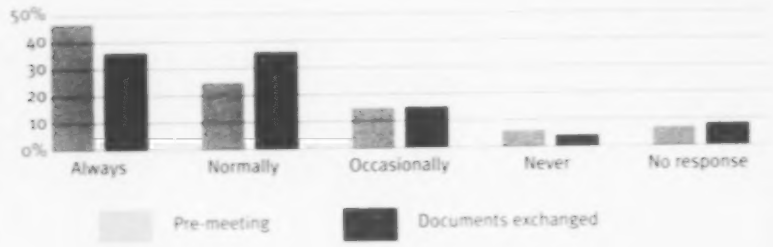


FIGURE 23: LOCATION OF APPRAISAL INTERVIEWS

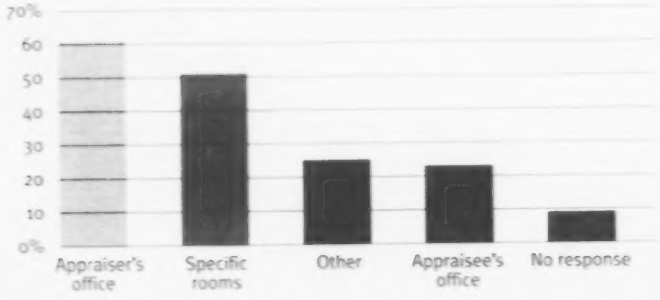


FIGURE 24: EXTENT TO WHICH APPRAISAL SCHEMES ARE DESIGNED TO INCLUDE THE IDENTIFICATION, RECORDING AND MONITORING OF SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

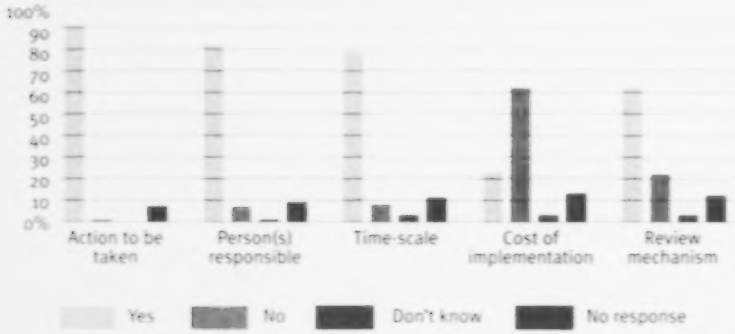
Staff development

Targets linked with organisational objectives

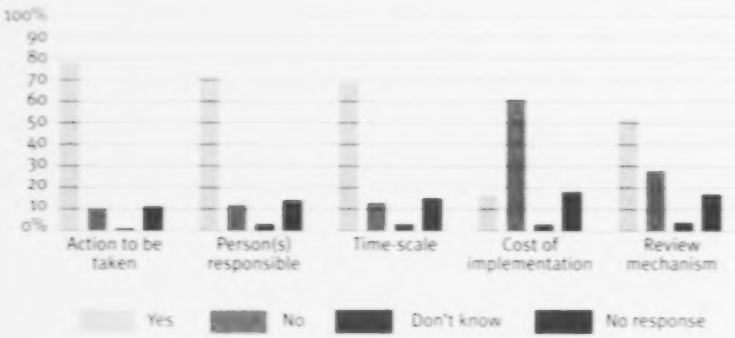
Individual performance-related pay

Group performance-related pay

FIGURE 25: LEVEL OF DETAIL TO WHICH APPRAISAL OUTCOMES ARE RECORDED



Staff development



Targets

FIGURE 26: EXTENT OF MONITORING OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES

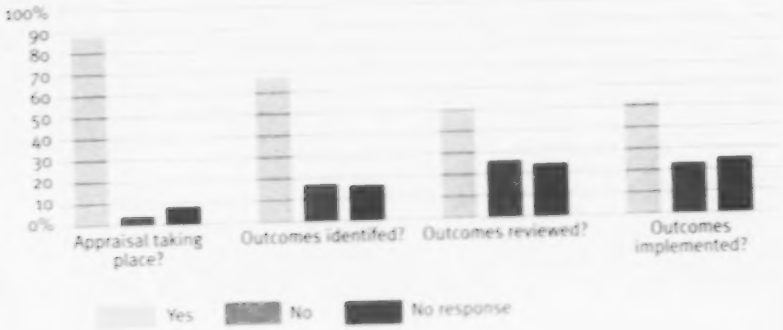


FIGURE 27: EXTENT OF EVALUATION OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES TO IDENTIFY BENEFITS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS

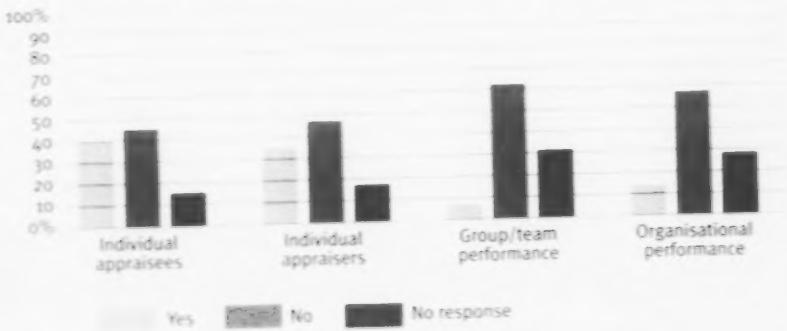


FIGURE 28: EXTENT OF COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES

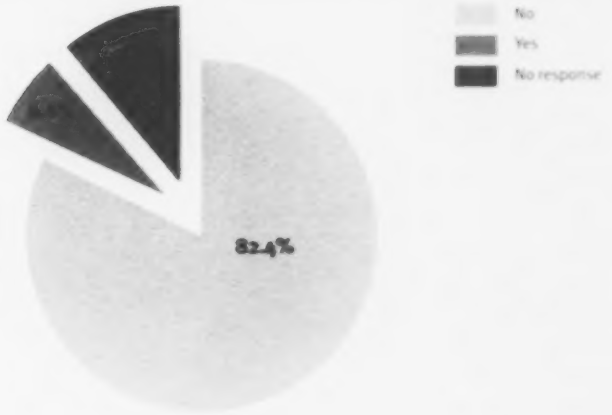
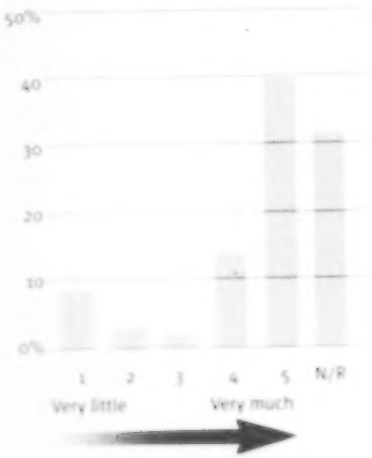
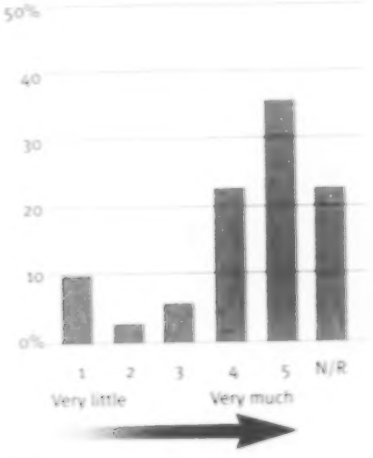


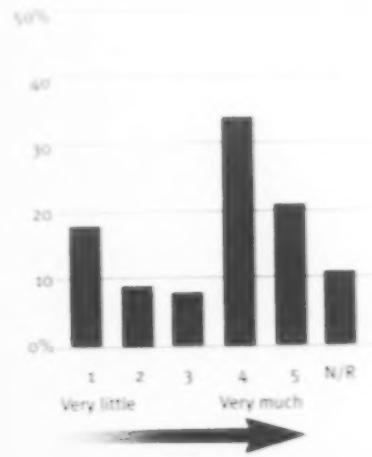
FIGURE 29: EXTENT OF PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF APPRAISAL SCHEMES



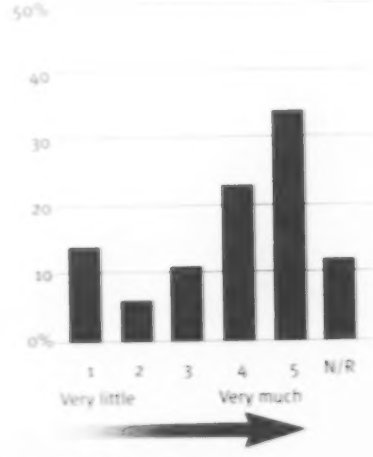
Individual appraisees



Individual appraisers



Group/team performance



Organisational performance

FIGURE 30: WHETHER OR NOT DISADVANTAGES ARE PERCEIVED

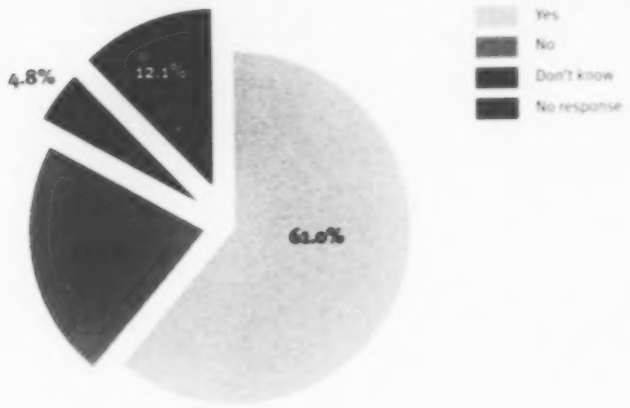
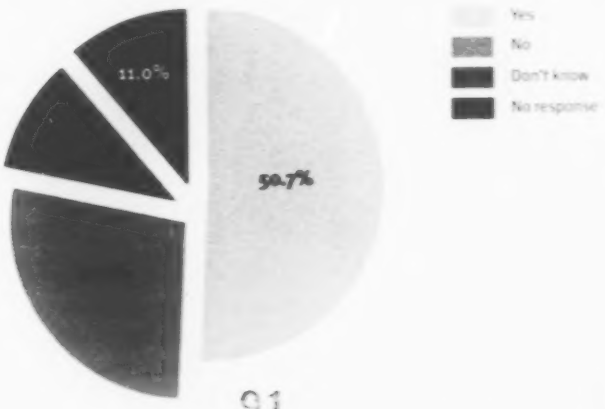


FIGURE 31: WHETHER OR NOT CHANGES ARE PLANNED



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